

## News Release

# Connecting Children with Nature Conference encourages simple steps for reconnecting young children with nature; Conference scheduled Wed., Sept. 29, 2010, at the U of M Crookston

By Itollefs on Monday, August 30, 2010

Interactions with nature when we are children make a difference in our health and well-being. Simple steps can help reconnect young children with nature, and create a mass movement encouraging these interactions to improve health and wellness in every child.

The upcoming Connecting Children and Nature Conference, scheduled for September 29, 2010, at the University of Minnesota, Crookston will engage K-12 educators, parents, and public health workers, along with community leaders and resource managers, in an effort to reconnect children with the natural world.



Keynote speaker Cheryl Charles, Ph.D., will present The Ecology of Hope: Building a Movement to Reconnect Children and Nature. Cheryl Charles is President and Co-founder, with Richard Louv and others, of the Children and Nature Network ([www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)), a non-profit organization dedicated to building a movement to re-connect children and nature. Cheryl will speak about the growing disconnect between children and nature, indicators of what Richard Louv calls nature-deficit disorder, and the scientific as well as common-sense evidence of the benefits to children from direct experience with nature on a daily basis in their lives. Grounded in research as well as experience, Cheryl offers practical suggestions for action by parents, grandparents, physicians, urban planners, architects, designers, business leaders, public officials, academics, educators and others concerned about the nature of childhood, the health of communities and the future of the Earth. The presentation will address why it is important to connect children and nature and what is the role of the conference attendees to do this work. During the noon lunch, participants will share stories of their childhood memories of interacting with nature.

During the day breakout sessions will include such topics as nature engaged families; using technology to connect students and nature; environmental education resources; organizing a community bike/walk audit; fundraising for community projects; and a look at the health benefits when children and nature connect.

The conference is funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is sponsored by US Fish & Wildlife Services, Rydell Wildlife Refuge, Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Extension Environmental Science Education, University of Minnesota Crookston, NW Statewide Health Improvement Program Cluster, Northwest Regional Development Commission, and U of M Regional Extension - Crookston.

For more information on the Connecting Children and Nature Conference, visit the U of M Crookston website or Deborah Zak at 218-281-8684 ([dzak@umn.edu](mailto:dzak@umn.edu)).

Today the University of Minnesota Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 17 minors, and more than 40 concentrations, including several online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of about 1,300 undergraduates from more than 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

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